NJTPA

Fall 2010

mobility MATTERS

Transportation Issues in the NJTPA Region

Livability in Northern New Jersey

Livability: A Legacy of Northern N.J. Communities

What's old is new again. With deep historical roots, many New Jersey towns have features dating back a century or more—including closely spaced row homes, grid street layouts, ornate brick and stone commercial buildings and downtown train stations—that are being rediscovered as the foundation for more "livable" and sustainable lifestyles. Ironically, many of the "antiquated" features are being looked to as wave of the future in community design.

BILL WITTKOP

▲ The planned community of Radburn in Fair Lawn, Bergen County was consciously designed for livability in the 1920s. With its interior parks and pedestrian paths, it has become an icon for town planners.

In many cases, New Jersey towns are showing the nation what it means to create communities where not every trip has to be by car, where not every shopping experience has to be at a mall, where people from diverse backgrounds and income levels can live comfortably together, and where conserving energy and doing good for the environment are part of daily life.

Perhaps no place says more about North Jersey's legacy than the community of Radburn in the borough of Fair Lawn in Bergen County. Radburn has become an icon for town planners. Founded in 1929, the community was intricately planned to separate pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Over 600 modest houses are arranged around the edge of "super blocks" with large interior parks. Located near Fair Lawn Train Station, the 149-acre neighborhood includes a shopping center, a community center, a library and a network of parks and trails.

Even newer suburban towns in New Jersey are able to draw on the examples of their older neighbors and make use of shared infrastructure—notably, the state's extensive mass transit system—to give residents new lifestyle options.

In the midst of economic recession, the ethos of getting back to basics and reclaiming what is valuable from the past is gaining ground. It is being combined with an appreciation for the power of new technologies and a greater understanding of the environmental impacts of various development patterns and their relation to the transportation system.

This issue of *Mobility Matters* highlights examples of livability and sustainability in communities throughout northern New Jersey that point to new and hopeful directions for the future.

Key Concepts

The terms "livability" and "sustainability" have been gaining a lot of currency recently, thanks to a push by the Obama Administration and major federal agencies.

The Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities formed by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development, has defined a livable community as one "in which people have multiple, convenient transportation and housing options as well as destinations easily accessible to people traveling in and out of cars." Six livability principles have been established (see box on page 3).

Sustainability emphasizes the effective use of financial, energy and natural resources in ways that

BILL WITTKOP

▶ **Preserving open space and providing recreational opportunities enhance communities' livability. Right, hikers and bikers enjoy a trail at Sandy Hook, Monmouth County.**

can be continued over time, without imposing burdens on future generations.

There are no formulas for meeting livability and sustainability goals. Communities are taking creative approaches in a host of areas, such as promoting transit-oriented development (TOD)—homes, businesses, schools and other development near train stations and bus terminals. Another related concept is promoting "complete streets," which involves road designs and investments that make streets accessible and safe for all travelers, including pedestrians and bicyclists.

Many communities have enhanced livability with features such as these:

- Mixed-use development in downtown areas, including renovated historic buildings and street level storefronts with offices or apartments above.
- Housing development affordable to a diverse population including members of the local workforce.
- Traditional street grids that more evenly distribute traffic, easing congestion on main routes.
- Traffic calming measures, such as narrowed lanes and crosswalks with pedestrian lights.
- Alternative travel options such as bike lanes, sidewalks, bicycle- or car-sharing programs, and shuttle buses.
- Preserving open spaces and natural resources and providing recreational opportunities.
- Clustering destinations or creating programs that minimize the length of auto and truck trips.

"As we go about investing transportation funding, we have to consider the role of transportation in its broadest context—how it can shape housing and economic development, how it can link residents with job opportunities, how it can affect the quality of life in our communities, among other factors."

—Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney, Chairman of the NJTPA

Spurring progress

Government has a significant role in spurring the innovation needed to improve livability. New Jersey has a long record in this regard. As the most densely populated state in the nation, New Jersey was one of first states to enact statewide legislation aimed at limiting sprawl and promoting "smart growth." The State Planning Act adopted in 1986 set in motion continuing efforts to realize smart growth in communities throughout the state.

While there have been continuing challenges to meeting the goal of smart growth over the years, recognition of its importance has gained wide acceptance among local officials and residents throughout New Jersey. The current efforts in the

NJTPA

THE NJTPA is the federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 6.7 million people in the 13-county northern New Jersey region. Currently, the NJTPA oversees over $2.5 billion in transportation investments. The NJTPA evaluates and approves proposed transportation improvement projects and provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input into funding decisions. It also sponsors and conducts studies, assists county planning agencies and monitors compliance with national air quality goals. The NJTPA serves the fourth most populous MPO region in the country. NJTPA Board meetings are held bi-monthly and are open to the public.

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areas of livability and sustainability are very much consistent with smart growth, broadening its focus beyond land use concerns.

Livability and sustainability are key priorities of *Plan 2035*, the Regional Transportation Plan for Northern New Jersey, which guides the planning process overseen by NJTPA.

"Transportation is about more than just moving people and goods," said Dennis McNerney, Bergen County Executive and Chairman of the NJTPA. "As we go about investing transportation funding, we have to consider the role of transportation in its broadest context—how it can shape housing and economic development, how it can link residents with job opportunities, how it can affect the quality of life in our communities, among other factors."

In addition, the concepts are considered in the NJTPA's studies of regional needs, including grant programs that fund studies by the 15 city and county "subregions" that are members of the NJTPA. Factors related to livability and sustainability are among the criteria used for establishing priorities among proposed transportation investments. Other NJTPA initiatives promoting livability include:

- **Walkable Community Workshops**—walking tours with local residents and officials aimed at identifying problems for pedestrians and developing strategies to address them.
- **Climate Change Working Group**—a forum for concerned stakeholders to identify, support and coordinate efforts in North Jersey to reduce :greenhouse gas emissions and to prepare the transportation system for climate change's impacts on the environment.
- **Regional Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan**—provides a regional coordination of ongoing efforts in northern and central New Jersey to meet transportation needs of senior citizens, the disabled, low-income persons and others who don't drive or have special transportation needs.

Six Principles of Livability

◆ **PROVIDE MORE TRANSPORTATION CHOICES.** Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce the nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

◆ **PROMOTE EQUITABLE, AFFORDABLE HOUSING.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

◆ **ENHANCE ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

◆ **SUPPORT EXISTING COMMUNITIES.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

◆ **COORDINATE AND LEVERAGE FEDERAL POLICIES AND INVESTMENT.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

◆ **VALUE COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

—Source: Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities

- **Local Safety Program** – supports the construction of quick-fix, high-impact safety improvements on county and local roadway facilities in the NJTPA region.

The NJTPA also works closely with the New Jersey Department of Transportation and NJ Transit, which administer a number of programs that promote TOD and other related initiatives. This includes the Transit Village program which provides funding and technical assistance to municipalities to redevelop or revitalize the areas around transit stations.

"The 100 or more train stations and other key transit hubs in northern New Jersey are a vital asset," said Morris County Freeholder Gene Feyl, also the First Vice Chairman of the NJTPA. "They are ready-made focal points for rebuilding communities, creating jobs and improving quality of life for residents. Many communities have made great strides in capitalizing on their rail connections."

Further information on many of the livability initiatives touched on in this publication can be found at the NJTPA website, www.njtpa.org. ●

THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY

◀ **Newark Broad Street Station, seen here just after its construction in the early 1900s, remains one of the state's busiest rail hubs.**

Zest in the City: Revitalizing Our Urban Cores

A key investment principle in *Plan 2035* is to "help the region grow wisely." To promote sustainable growth, the NJTPA supports compact development in areas already served by transportation infrastructure, including redevelopment of urban areas. ● "Compact development and redevelopment reduces pressure on rural land and helps preserve open space and protect the environment," said Hudson County Executive and NJTPA Second Vice Chairman Tom DeGise. "It also creates more walkable, transit-friendly communities, helping improve the efficiency of the transportation system." ● Additional benefits to sustainable growth are greater energy efficiency, healthier lifestyles, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions, among others.

"Compact development and redevelopment reduces pressure on rural land and helps preserve open space and protect the environment."

—Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise, NJTPA Second Vice Chairman

Historic Design Standards, Light Rail Aid Rebound of Paulus Hook

Residents in the Paulus Hook section of Jersey City have seen their neighborhood transformed into a model of urban revival over the past two decades, with restored historic brownstones, thousands of new apartments in well-designed brick structures, and walkable, tree-lined streets in the heart of a bustling city. The neighborhood's eastern edge along the Hudson River has new office towers housing the satellite operations of major New York City financial firms.

The area's stabilization can be traced back to the 1980s, when the city adopted strict historic district design standards protecting Paulus Hook and a few other neighborhoods. Many of the area's historic structures had deteriorated, but the designation forced owners to restore the buildings rather than tear them down or make additions that clashed with the neighborhood's character. One by one the homes were improved, building community pride and ultimately attracting further investment and restoration.

The revival of Paulus Hook, an area that already had excellent public transportation access, gained further momentum with the launch of the Hudson- Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) in 2000. The line runs along Essex and Hudson streets in Paulus Hook with a stop near the office towers.

Paulus Hook sits roughly at the center of the 19-mile HBLR, which handles roughly 42,000 trips each weekday. The line is credited as a catalyst for the construction of thousands of new apartments and raising property values along its length from Bayonne to North Bergen in Hudson County (with a further extension planned to Tenafly in Bergen County). "These developments," according to a 2008 Rutgers University study, "represent new riders, new ratables, new business creation investment, new employment opportunities, environmental improvement and a fresh engaging sense of place in station areas."

▶ **The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail has aided redevelopment efforts in Jersey City's historic Paulus Hook neighborhood.**

The HBLR links to other mass transit options along the Hudson River waterfront—including ferry services, commuter trains, subway-like PATH trains and numerous major bus routes. With its wealth of energy-efficient travel options, Jersey City is one of the most transit-friendly places in the nation. About 60 percent of workers commuting to or from Jersey City use mass transit—second only to New York among the nation's 100 largest cities—and 9 percent walk to work.

The type of development spurred by transit varies by neighborhood. In contrast to the somewhat genteel Paulus Hook, the area around the Grove Street PATH station a few blocks away has a lively nightlife and a thriving arts scene.

The recession has taken its toll with a modest drop in light rail ridership and a fall off in new development. Still, the benefits of the mass transit investment remain. Beyond enhanced mobility, nationwide, studies have shown that homes near transit are holding their value better than in those in more auto-dependent areas. ●

Steinbach Comeback Helps Revive Asbury Park's Cookman Avenue

The "Jewel of the Jersey Shore" is shining once more. After a three-decade economic downturn, Asbury Park has reemerged as a lively city by the sea that's drawing comparisons to Miami Beach.

Those who haven't been there in a while are often surprised by how much has changed. Historic buildings that were boarded up for years have been converted into stores and apartments, while several blighted structures have been razed and replaced by new construction.

At the heart of the redevelopment effort is Cookman Avenue, a downtown strip that connects the train station area on Main Street to the beachfront. Thanks to a wave of investment by major developers, small business entrepreneurs and new residents, Cookman started bustling again in the early 2000s.

"Downtown now you have trouble finding a parking space," said Asbury Park Director of Planning and Redevelopment Donald Sammet. "The restaurant scene is excellent. It's like night and day down there—it was almost like a ghost town."

Perhaps no site symbolizes Asbury Park's heyday, slide and resurgence better than the Steinbach building, which takes up a triangular block that fronts Cookman Avenue. In the late 1890s, the building began its run as one of New Jersey's most prominent department stores until market forces, including the opening of a Steinbach location at nearby Seaview Square Mall, caused the store to close in 1979. The structure lay dormant for several years and was almost destroyed by a fire in 1989.

Three years ago, reconstruction on the building was finished. Steinbach now houses 63 apartments on its upper floors and several commercial tenants on the ground floor, such as the popular restaurant Old Man Rafferty's. According to Sammet, the success of the Steinbach project and Cookman Avenue has spread to other areas.

▲ The recently renovated Steinbach building on Cookman Avenue in Asbury Park.

Down the road, a luxurious mixed-use project called Wesley Grove was recently completed in a barren area where a few abandoned buildings previously stood. The block-and-a-half-long complex has created a well-lit, streetscaped link for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling between the waterfront and the downtown section of Cookman Avenue. "It allows people to walk and feel safe walking between the two districts," Sammet said. ●

Once N.J.'s Tallest, Building Again Aims High

Four years ago, Eleven80 did a complete 180, transforming from an abandoned skyscraper to the first new luxury housing project in Newark in over 40 years. Capitalizing on its location above the Newark Subway and blocks from Penn Station, the building has attracted tenants as an alternative to renting in New York City.

Eleven80, named for its 1180 Raymond Blvd. address in the city's central business district, opened in the early 1930s as the Lefcourt Newark Building and briefly enjoyed status as the state's tallest building. The structure was one of the premier office buildings in Newark before badly deteriorating over a 20-year period of non-use.

Developer Cogswell Realty Group saw potential in the Art Deco building and committed to a massive effort to restore its façade and insides. Its 35 floors were recast as 317 one- and two-bedroom apartments along with extensive amenities, including a private health club, four-lane bowling alley, pool hall and multimedia room.

Eleven80's opening coincided with Newark's efforts to recapture the street life the city's downtown enjoyed when the tower was originally built. The New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the Prudential Center and a number of new restaurants and businesses have opened in the district over the last few years. According to Eleven80's owners, the project's commuter-friendly selling point has proven effective, as over 80 percent of its tenants work in Manhattan. ●

◀ The Lefcourt Newark Building (now called Eleven80) underwent a major restoration effort and is now home to over 300 apartments.

COURTESY OF NEW BRUNSWICK DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

▶ Among the recent investments in New Brunswick are the Heldrich hotel and conference center (above) and the upcoming Gateway Transit Village, shown at right in an artist's rendering.

Nonprofit Helps Get Hub City Back on Track

New Brunswick is home to Rutgers University, Johnson & Johnson World Headquarters and the Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital. Building upon these three pillars, the city has become one of the most impressive examples of urban revitalization in New Jersey.

Four decades ago, New Brunswick was at a crossroads—the state of the city was bad enough that Johnson & Johnson, which was founded in New Brunswick, considered moving. Fortunately for New Brunswick, the Fortune 500 Company instead chose to join forces with Rutgers University and the New Jersey Economic Development Authority to form the New Brunswick Development Corporation, or Devco, a nonprofit urban real estate development firm that would help revitalize their hometown.

"In the 1970s, New Brunswick was just a residue of its previous glory, in a state of deterioration," said Anton Nelessen, Undergraduate Program Director and Associate Professor at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers. "And Devco, since its inception, has been a persistent force for redevelopment in the city that has brought about a great deal of positive change, but of course there is much more to be done."

Devco has played a major role in completing at least 13 redevelopment projects that have helped to revitalize the area. According to its website, Devco has overseen more than $1.6 billion in investment to aid in New Brunswick's economic revitalization. One prime example is the Heldrich, which contains a 250-room hotel and conference center, retail space, academic space and luxury condominiums.

Perhaps the capstone of Devco's efforts, the Gateway Transit Village, soon to be the city's tallest building, is currently under construction. The structure will contain 44,000 square feet of retail and 12,500 square feet of office space, 42 condominiums and 150 residential rental units (20 percent of which will be affordable), along with a 650-space parking garage. The building will also have a direct connection to the New Brunswick Train Station via a public promenade.

The Hub City's roots as a rail center have never been overlooked. New Brunswick station has served as an important asset in the city's revitalization, providing reliable access to the downtown core for residents, workers, students and visitors. In 2005, the city was designated a transit village by the NJDOT due to its consistent transit-oriented development, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and "place-making" efforts. ●

Urban Townhomes Transform Low-Income Housing

Townhouses described as "family friendly" with "gracious living space" are helping transform public and low-income housing in northern New Jersey with a new standard of livability for residents. The descriptions were applied to 43 new two- and three-bedroom rental homes called Oak Brook Square that opened in fall 2009 in Newark's South Ward.

At the opening, Newark Mayor Cory Booker, a member of the NJTPA Board of Trustees, said the development "will offer our residents stylish living conditions [and]…an eco-friendly environment."

Hundreds of similar low-rise, townhouse-style units have been built in the region's urban areas in recent years to replace the often aging high-rise projects that suffered high crime rates and often carried a stigma for low-income residents. Nearly all the homes are near bus and rail transit lines, offering residents convenient travel options.

▶ The Gloria Robinson Court Homes complex, located in Jersey City.

Jersey City Mayor and NJTPA Board member Jerramiah Healy said at the 2009 opening of the Barbara Place Terrace Apartments that the development "will replace the barracks-style public housing that once stood here with 56 affordable housing and 11 market rate rental units which will help bring quality housing to the proud and hard-working families of Jersey City."

Also in Jersey City, a second phase of the award-winning Gloria Robinson Court Homes is under construction. The first phase featured 144 residential units plus community spaces and an outdoor recreation. ●

Transit-Oriented Development in New Jersey

Mixed-use development around rail stations and other public transportation hubs is called transit-oriented development (TOD). TOD creates compact mixed-use communities adjacent to transit infrastructure with the goal of increasing transit use and reducing automobile commuting trips. ● "So many towns in our region grew up around rail stations and have thrived for over a century thanks to their presence," said NJTPA First Vice Chairman Gene Feyl. "As demand for transit-oriented development continues to rise, centers of transportation—as they have for decades—continue to drive the economic engine of our state as well as our local communities." ● Many of the region's rail and bus hubs could potentially serve as sites for future TODs. The NJTPA supports these opportunities through its long-range transportation plan *(Plan 2035)*, various study programs and other planning activities.

"So many towns in our region grew up around rail stations and have thrived for over a century thanks to their presence."

—Morris County Freeholder Gene Feyl, NJTPA First Vice Chairman

The Highlands at Morristown Station

Morristown's efforts to promote transit-oriented development took a big step forward in 1999, when the city made some zoning changes and designated the area around its train station (which offers Midtown Direct service to New York via NJ Transit) as a mixed-use "Transit Village Core." The following year, Morristown became one of the first five sites to receive the state's official Transit Village designation, signaling intentions to plan multiple TOD projects within a half-mile of the train station.

Around this time, a project that came to be known The Highlands at Morristown Station took root on 3 acres of land formerly owned by NJ Transit (and sold to the developers) at the intersection of Morris Street and Lafayette Avenue, right next to the train station.

Today, almost fully occupied, it stands as a fine example of mixed-use TOD, featuring a combination of 271 upscale one- and two-bedroom rental apartments, 8,000 square feet of ground floor retail space, and a six-floor, 724-space parking garage.

Over 400 parking spaces in the garage are permanently designated for commuter parking. The parking facility replaced former surface parking that was located on NJ Transit property. NJ Transit and the developers now "own" the parking, similar to a condominium arrangement.

◀ **A view of the Highlands at Morristown Station complex from the neighboring train station's platform.**

Deals like this between developers and NJ Transit are not only a way to promote TOD, but also increase ridership and generating additional parking revenue for NJ Transit, while also preserving transit accessibility and generating tax ratables for the municipality. And for commuters, it doesn't get much more convenient: the door to the parking garage is about 30 feet from a walkway connecting to the train station's platform.

"It's amazing—you walk out and you are on the train, pretty much. It's a fantastic project," said Mike Fabrizio, Executive Director of the Morristown Downtown Partnership. "It demonstrates the effectiveness of these [TOD] projects if they're done right and in the right location." ●

LANDMARK COMPANIES, LLC

▶ Rahway Train Station has been a catalyst for transit-oriented development, such as the Park Square project two blocks away.

Rahway Downtown Rebounds Around Train Station

Over the last two decades, Rahway has reinvented itself and its new image is intricately linked to its train station.

Conveniently located about 45 minutes from both New York and Trenton at the convergence of the Amtrak/NJ Transit Northeast Corridor and NJ Transit's North Jersey Coast Line, the station is perhaps the city's greatest asset. And after decades of decline in the downtown business district, it is an asset that the city heavily relied upon as the catalyst for urban revitalization.

In the late 1990s, all of the pieces began coming together. First, NJ Transit invested over $13 million to renovate the aging station. Two years later an award-winning public plaza was added, and in 2005, a new 524-car parking deck adjacent to the station opened. This initial investment has greatly improved the attractiveness of the station, which has stimulated an increase in transit ridership to major employment centers like Manhattan, Newark and Trenton.

In 2002, Rahway was given the designation of a Transit Village by the New Jersey Department of Transportation. Over the next five years, the city grew in population and the station accumulated over 500 additional daily boardings. Some of the city's new residents reside in several recently completed developments within walking distance to the station. Among them is Park Square, a mixed-use development with one- and two-bedroom apartments located two blocks from the station. Along with increased residential density in the station area, around 200,000 square feet of office space (180,000 in 2007) and over 30,000 square feet of retail space (33,000 in 2007) have been built since the transit village designation. ●

Station's Prosperity Spreads in South Orange

South Orange has been held up as a national model for a town using its transit hub as a springboard for economic revitalization. By the early 1990s, nearly a quarter of the storefronts in the village's downtown were vacant and foot traffic had dwindled. Then in 1994, the Village Trustees adopted a redevelopment plan that called for the restoration of the train station and strategies for reinvigorating the downtown area around it.

The modern South Orange Train Station, located at 19 Sloan St., was built during the World War I era along the Morris & Essex Railroad line. The structure was comprised of a ground-level ticketing station and three tracks elevated on a viaduct. But by the time the redevelopment plan was enacted, a cluster of stores nestled beneath the viaduct had fallen into disrepair.

The village and NJ Transit worked with a developer to renovate the facilities and attract upscale tenants. The station was given a valuable boost when NJ Transit introduced express service that made the trip to Manhattan 20 minutes faster. Today, the station and Sloan Street include retail stores, eateries, offices and street life.

The prosperity spread to the downtown area, too, as a number of transit village developments replaced dilapidated and underutilized properties. Among them are the South Orange Performing Arts Center, which opened in 2006; the 200-unit Gaslight Commons apartments, named after the gas street lamps that have come to symbolize the village; the Eden Marketplace gourmet grocery shop and café; and the Avenue at South Orange, a 79-unit luxury condo complex. ●

NJ TRANSIT

▶ Several new commercial and residential projects have been completed over the last few years around South Orange Train Station.

Built to Last: New Jersey's Downtowns

Challenged economically for years by shopping malls on the highways, the small town main street is making a comeback in northern New Jersey. In many ways, these community centers embodied the ideals of livability long before the term was conceived. ● Residents of New Jersey's downtowns can leave the car behind and walk to dinner, work or the community theater. The compact living spaces above the strips' ground floor stores mean smaller energy costs for residents, a lifestyle that's become attractive to a green-minded generation that is now moving into its first homes. ● Today, these classic neighborhoods, with their local landmarks and vintage architecture, are being reinvented by entrepreneurial small-business owners who now occupy their spaces. Sometimes, even a modest investment in transportation can prove instrumental in aiding the transformation.

Washington Borough: Traditional Downtown for a Rural Region

Variety is the spice of life. And much the same goes for community development. In downtown Washington Borough in Warren County, the new Midtown Limited building is bringing benefits of mixed-use development to a reviving downtown business district.

Taking the place of four deteriorated buildings on Washington Avenue that were torn down in 2007, the first of two Midtown Limited buildings has been built, with the second underway. They have commercial space on the ground floor with 48 residential units on two upper floors—reviving the living-working mix of classic American small town business districts.

"All those people who moved into the Midtown Limited are now residents who shop downtown." said Sandi Cerami, Executive Director of the Washington Business Improvement District. "We have seen an increase in foot traffic."

The mixed-use building is adding to the progress in creating an attractive and walkable downtown. A streetscape project, undertaken with the help of a NJDOT grant, has rebuilt sidewalks, lighting, curbs and other elements to enhance pedestrian crosswalks.

A redevelopment plan adopted by the town in 2009 envisions a "traditional town center with vibrant streetscapes, quality open space, pedestrian comfort, and adequate parking." The strategy has been working.

BILL WITTKOP

Even with the recession, "we're bringing people in" Cerami said, referring to the prospects for new businesses and development opportunities.

Historic buildings are also part of the mix. A building with a bank on the ground floor includes a restored ballroom used years ago by the local Mason chapter.

Revival of Washington's downtown is helping the borough return to its historic role in serving the needs of the surrounding rural area. While big-box stores and shopping centers have been established along some nearby rural routes, patronizing them can require a trade-off—prices may be better but more driving is often required and the shopping experience can be impersonal.

Driving downtown, patrons can find small businesses offering a host of retail and entertainment options, many within walking distance. Farmers can even find tractors at the local car dealership. Again, variety is a strength.

For its 6,700 residents, Washington Borough "still has that small town feeling with the advantages of living in the country," she said. ●

▲ **The completion of the Midtown Limited Building and attractive streetscape work has helped generate more foot traffic in Washington Borough, Warren County.**

BILL WITTKOP

▶ Pedestrians enjoy a weekend stroll down Main Street in Sparta, Sussex County.

"These upgrades are in keeping with 'complete streets' principles, which are designed to balance safety and accessibility for all users, not just drivers."

—Sussex County Freeholder Susan M. Zellman, NJTPA Board Member

Sparta's Investments Yield Walkable Downtown

The "walkability" of downtown Sparta in Sussex County represents a return on an investment that local officials began making in the mid-1990s.

As part of its phased Master Plan implementation, the Township Council spent about $1.2 million in the "town center" district to install sewer and water lines along Main Street, reconstruct roads and add or complete sidewalks. Township Manager David Troast said those improvements, and others subsequently financed with grants, helped boost economic development and residential construction near the downtown, and connect almost the entire town center (the township looks to complete a final segment of connections in step with anticipated redevelopment as the economy improves).

"We said, 'Look, we've got to invest in the infrastructure of the town to entice people to invest in our town,'" Troast said. As a result, in downtown Sparta today, Troast said, "We've got lighting, we've got benches, we've got walkways…and all of the sidewalks are interconnected."

At 5 feet wide, sidewalks are separated from the roadway by a 3-foot "paver strip" that covers utilities and also creates a "safe zone," according to Troast. "Most people walk on the sidewalk and not on the paver strip, so you have the separation of vehicle traffic and the walking space."

In addition, Troast said some traffic-calming measures and new crosswalks have improved the area's walkability. For example, one mid-block crosswalk connected a parking area to a popular church. You can also walk from the downtown to a major senior citizens complex. And, in addition to a system of connected bike paths, Sussex County's transit system picks up and drops off riders in front of town hall, where a park-and-ride is nearby.

"These upgrades are in keeping with 'complete streets' principles, which are designed to balance safety and accessibility for all users, not just drivers," said Sussex County Freeholder Susan M. Zellman, also a member of the NJTPA Board. ●

Theater Stars in Pompton Lakes Redevelopment

The Smiling Rhino Theater is bringing big city culture to the small town of Pompton Lakes in Passaic County, contributing to a downtown revival and strengthened community along the way. Housed in a historic building that once was a movie theater—and, long ago, a vaudeville showcase—the nonprofit theater company puts on about nine adult and children's productions a year. The play "42nd Street" will be this fall's top attraction.

BILL WITTKOP

▶ A former movie house in Pompton Lakes, Passaic County, is performing a second act as a community theater.

"Culture is something that draws people," Artistic Director Carmela Wolosz said. "[The theater] has been an excellent thing for the town. People come in for a production and they'll also do dinner."

Indeed, restaurants are among the new businesses that have opened in long vacant spaces in the downtown in recent years. "We've had a good run of business start-ups," said John Soojian, chair of the local business improvement district (BID), while noting that the recession has taken its toll, with increasing turnover in storefronts.

Still, the progress is a great achievement for an old industrial town. Since the 1970s, shopping centers and big box stores outside of town drew customers away. Pompton Lakes began to chart a course for revival with a county-led visioning process in 2006, followed by the adoption of a new master plan for the borough in 2007. With support from Congressman Bill Pascrell, Pompton Lakes has carried out a streetscape upgrade with rebuilt sidewalks, energy-efficient LED lighting and façade improvements to entice visitors and encourage walking. The BID hosts a weekly farmers market during summer.

The town looks to attract further development downtown by capitalizing on its role as a transportation hub. Upward of 100 buses per day pass through the town and there is a prospect for reestablished train service on the NYS&W line in the future. "Our redevelopment gives something to transportation and obviously transportation gives something to our redevelopment," Soojian said.

The town still faces challenges, including pollution left over from a closed Dupont plant and periodic flooding that has displaced residents. In those times, residents "tend to pull together and help other people out. It's just a nice community," Soojian said. ●

Canal Crossing Gives Industrial Site a Major Makeover

Canal Crossing in Somerset County's South Bound Brook is an ongoing redevelopment success story from a number of different livability perspectives. But it hasn't come easy.

Canal Crossing is built on an 11-acre site—right along Main Street in the downtown—that was once home to busy industrial plants, most recently the GAF Corporation, which closed in 1984. The infamously vacant brownfield site, with its 100-year-old idle smokestack, was seen as a contaminated eyesore of ghostly, crumbling buildings.

After a series of false starts, setbacks, and cleared regulatory hurdles, demolition and careful cleanup of the site finally got underway in 2003, preparing the tract for mixed-use redevelopment. Two years later, construction began on 13 three-story buildings containing new residential townhouses. A total of 152 townhouses have been built—all of them sold and occupied—bringing in many new residents and giving the downtown a fresher look that also includes streetscape and lighting improvements along Main Street.

Pedestrian access to the recreational Delaware and Raritan Canal towpath along the Raritan River, which was not permitted during the site's industrial days, is now possible by a historic, rehabilitated swing bridge. Commuters have a 10-minute walk from their Canal Crossing homes to NJ Transit's Bound Brook Train Station.

"Canal Crossing is a true success story because not only did it clean up an industrial site that was vacant for over 20 years, but the redevelopment reinforced Main Street concepts and the physical and visual links to the Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park," Somerset County Planning Director Robert Bzik said.

When the economy begins to recover, planned commercial development is expected to continue, allowing residents to walk or bicycle to shops and restaurants adjacent to the townhouse buildings. "Completing any retail component in a mixed-use project today is challenging given market conditions," Bzik acknowledged. "But, projects with sound planning fundamentals—like Canal Crossing—have a competitive advantage." ●

▲ The Canal Crossing development took the place of a brownfield site in South Bound Brook, Somerset County.

BILL WITTKOP

◀ Bergenline Avenue in Hudson County is renowned for its lively shopping and restaurant scene.

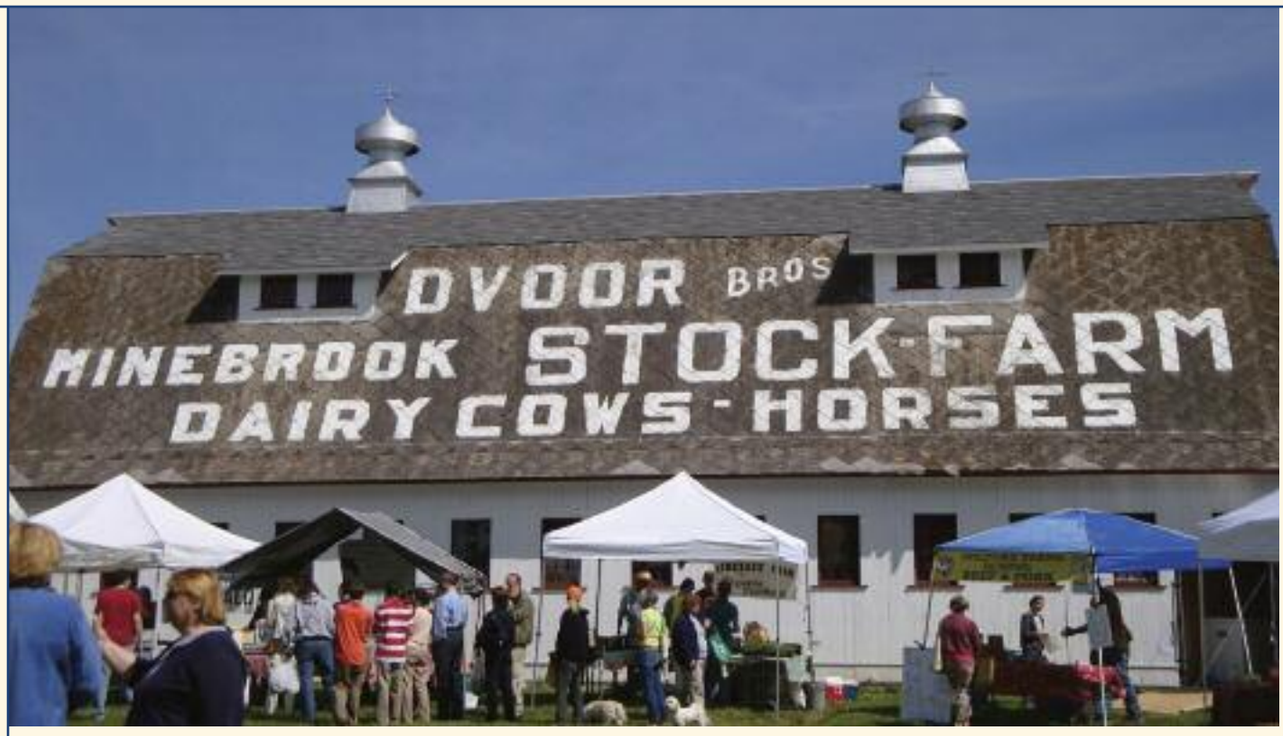
Bergenline Avenue a Thoroughfare with International Flair

Thriving shopping districts often conjure up thoughts of high-end clothing stores, fancy outdoor cafes, expensive restaurants and wine bars situated along tree-lined streets with wide sidewalks. The commercial strip along Bergenline Avenue in northern Hudson County lacks most of these characteristics yet still manages to be one of the liveliest downtown shopping districts in New Jersey.

Bergenline Avenue serves as the unofficial main street of northern Hudson County as it passes through Union City, West New York, Guttenberg and North Bergen. Bergenline Avenue boasts a diverse retail experience, with over 300 shops and restaurants. With many mom-and-pop businesses, Bergenline Avenue offers surprises not found in suburban malls, notably a wide variety of reasonably priced restaurants with an international flair—Cuban, Ecuadorian, Italian, Indian and more.

The sidewalks are often crowded with shoppers—especially on Saturday afternoons—and hundreds of buses and jitneys ply the streets. The Hudson-Bergen Light Rail line also serves Bergenline Avenue in Union City, offering connections to destinations along the Hudson River waterfront, as well as ferries and commuter trains. However, it's the pedestrian activity that gives Bergenline Avenue an aura of excitement. On a typical day, visitors can count more pedestrians and cyclists roaming the avenue than cars driving down it.

Serving one of the most densely populated areas of the state, the street has a ready-made customer base right at hand. Much of the local population is Spanish-speaking, with a large Cuban-American community—second in size only to that of Miami—centered in Union City. ●



HUNTERDON LAND TRUST

▶ The Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township, Hunterdon County, hosts farmers markets every Sunday that can draw up to 1,000 visitors, according to its organizers. The historic tract, once owned by William Penn, was preserved for open space and recreation in 1999.

Farmers Markets Help Squash Transportation Costs, Beet Back Sprawl

IT'S A CLOUDLESS AUGUST DAY at Military Park in Newark, and a crowd of more than a hundred relaxes on lunch breaks, listens to local singer Hunter Hayes belt out Marvin Gaye, and, of course, sifts through fresh white eggplants. ● Every Thursday from July to late October, the corner of Broad Street and Raymond Boulevard comes alive with the Newark Downtown District Farmers Market, an open-air bazaar of local produce, baked goods and crafts. More than just a popular social gathering, the market offers residents a central place to shop for a wide variety of fruits and vegetables in a neighborhood where they're tough to find. For vendors, it's a chance to sell goods directly to consumers in a market that's served almost exclusively by convenience stores. ● Farmers markets are growing like corn stalks, thanks to heightened societal interests in healthy diets, organic foods and physical fitness. In August, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported the number of registered markets nationally jumped from 5,274 in 2009 to 6,132 in 2010, a rise of 16 percent. According to the USDA, there were about a half-dozen such markets operating in Newark this year and over 110 throughout the Garden State.

"When you buy from farmers markets, everything you eat is grown a few miles away and you're helping support local growers."

—Hunterdon County Freeholder Matthew Holt, NJTPA Third Vice Chairman

"Farmers markets cut down the number of miles food has to travel before it reaches the dinner table," said Hunterdon County Freeholder and NJTPA Third Vice Chairman Matthew Holt. "A lot of the produce we buy at the supermarket is imported from other states and countries. When you buy from farmers markets, everything you eat is grown a few miles away and you're helping support local growers."

The markets also reduce the travel for Garden State-grown produce, since trips from the farm to a distributor and from the plant to the grocery store are no longer necessary. Surprisingly, this old-fashioned sales method is being viewed by a new generation of farmers as one way of modernizing their businesses. Cutting out the middle man means less overhead and greater profits for the farmer.

"The farmers who embrace this model are very entrepreneurial," said Margaret Waldock, Executive Director of the Hunterdon Land Trust Alliance (HLTA), which runs a highly successful market at the Dvoor Farm in Raritan Township. "They're very energetic and they're using tools like social media to get the word out on what they're selling."

Aside from the importance of sustaining regional food systems in communities on New Jersey's urban/suburban fringes, farmland preservation is a key to combating sprawl. The state has made important strides on this front in recent years, whether through buying properties or other creative arrangements, like purchasing a tract's development rights.

For instance, in 2007, the state, Middlesex County and South Brunswick Township bought the development rights to the 149-acre Barclay Farm, a community staple that grows Christmas trees, fruits and vegetables. The deal ensured the family could continue to own and operate the property as a for-profit farm, but could never develop it as anything else. Buying the development rights was less expensive than buying the tract outright and spared the state from handling its daily operations.

The Dvoor Farm, a historic local landmark once owned by William Penn, was under the threat of development when it was preserved in 1999.

◀ **A popular farmers market is held every Thursday from the summer to fall at Military Park in downtown Newark. The market offers city residents access to a wide variety of locally grown produce.**

A coalition of government agencies, nonprofits and private donors contributed to purchase the 40-acre tract and transferred its ownership and control to the HLTA. Under the terms of accepting state Green Acres funds, the land can only be used public recreation and farming purposes.

The market at Dvoor started four years ago with just four vendors. The HLTA kept it going and on any given Sunday today, it hosts about 20 local vendors and 1,000 visitors, Waldock said.

"Our instincts were telling us this was going to work. We timed it perfectly with a trend," Waldock said. "People are really responding. It's exciting to see." ●

Freedom in Choice: Expanding Transportation Options

One of the six principles of livability is to provide more transportation choices. Throughout this publication, we've highlighted communities that have improved their accommodations for walking, bicycling and riding public transit. When a variety of options are in place so residents don't have to drive themselves to work, school or other local destinations, good things follow. Among them, household transportation costs and gasoline consumption go down, while air quality and traffic conditions improve.

Bike Lockers Offer Convenience, Security for Commuters

MEADOWLINK

▶ Weather-proof bike lockers can be rented at many NJ Transit stations for a modest fee.

Since 1994, NJ Transit has teamed with transportation management associations (TMAs) and municipalities to provide long-term bike locker rentals at train stations and other commuter hubs in the region. The sturdy, weather-proof lockers collectively provide secure shelter for 375 bikes at about 30 locations.

They feature tamper-proof locks (so you don't have to fumble with a chain) and have enough room for a bike and helmet. The rental fee is about $90 annually, plus a $25 refundable key deposit.

Regionwide, the overall locker occupancy rate hovers around 67 percent, according to NJ Transit Service Planner Fred Storey. "We don't make any money on the program," he said. "It's just an extra service for our passengers."

TransOptions, the TMA for the Morris County area, administers bike lockers at seven locations. Vice President Don Watt said the lockers are most popular in towns where livability is enhanced.

"In walkable towns, like your Madisons and Chathams, and where there's also restricted parking at the train stations, that's where more people tend to think about a locker," Watt said.

James Barlow has rented a bike locker at NJ Transit's Belmar Train Station since 2007 and uses it several times a month in the warmer seasons. He said his locker adds peace of mind and flexibility to his commute. "With the bike in the locker, I don't have to worry about weather or vandalism. Some days, I'll ride my bike and just leave it in the locker if I have plans to get off at another station for dinner or the like," Barlow said. ●

"I applaud NJ Transit for partnering with people who ride the buses to develop the innovative Go Bus service, which will enhance our residents' quality of life."

—Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., NJTPA Secretary

Go Bus Offers Workers Speedy, Comfortable Access to Airport

From pilots to mechanics to baggage handlers to restaurant staff, it takes a massive workforce to accommodate the 33 million passengers and 765,000 tons of cargo that pass through Newark Liberty International Airport each year. To help serve this growing regional job hub, NJ Transit recently launched the Go Bus 28, a specialized line that gives workers fast, round-the-clock access to the airport.

Go Bus 28 links residential areas in Bloomfield and Newark with major employment centers in downtown Newark and the airport zone, with stops at every terminal and nearby work locations such as the maintenance facilities in the north area of the airport.

Getting stuck at red lights is a frustration commuters face less on the Go Bus, which benefits from priority signalization at key points along the 12-mile route.

"I applaud NJ Transit for partnering with people who ride the buses to develop the innovative Go Bus service, which will enhance our residents' quality of life," said Essex County Executive Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr., who also serves as Secretary of the NJTPA Board of Trustees.

◀ Residents arrive for breakfast at the Senior Outreach Services Center in Brick, Ocean County.

Brick Programs Ensure Seniors' Mobility

With its high concentration of age-restricted developments, affordability and seaside location, Ocean County has become one of the Northeast's top retirement destinations. However, while Brick (population 80,000) has its share of luxurious gated 55 and over communities, it is also the home of the Chambers Bridge Residence, George Conway, David Fried and Forge Pond apartments—housing complexes open only to low-income seniors and disabled persons.

These residents have unique needs, and Brick has answered the call—every day, at its Senior Outreach Services Center. Residents who phone the office can request free door-to-door car rides to doctor's office visits, bus transportation to complimentary meals at the senior center and Meals on Wheels deliveries to their homes. In addition, the senior center helps coordinate weekly bus rides to local shopping centers and periodic trips to recreational events, educational seminars and health screenings.

The township has a staff position dedicated to handling the medical trips, according to Edward Moroney, an assistant in the Mayor's Office. This person may give 15-20 seniors rides to well visits per week, waiting for the patient in the doctor's office until the appointment is through, he said.

"These are mostly people who are not comfortable behind the wheel or don't have immediate family members around," said Moroney, who handled some of the driver duties as a township intern in 1998.

Brick's school district recently forged a partnership with the township on these services, allowing them to continue despite the budgetary pressures brought on by the economy. The school district supplies two buses and drivers to take residents to and from daily meals at the senior center, while the township pays for the meal costs.

Residents over 60 or adults with disabilities can also rely on the county's public transportation system, Ocean Ride, for similar services. Ocean Ride operates shuttles along a number of fixed routes throughout the county and also accommodates requests for door-to-door transportation to doctor's visits, shopping centers, transit facilities and other destinations. Ocean Ride is available on a first come, first serve basis, and accepts voluntary donations from riders. ●

Designed by and for customers, the Go Bus features enhancements for added comfort such as high back seating, individual lighting and air conditioning controls, a luggage storage area, overhead racks, hand straps, and on-board audio and visual bus stop announcements. Each bus is clearly marked with the Go Bus logo and unique color scheme. The route's 25 stops feature colorful, easily identifiable shelters, improved lighting, seating and information displays.

For more information, visit www.njtransit.com/gobus. ●

ADAM E. MOREIRA

◀ NJ Transit's fleet of Go Buses are marked with an easily identifiable logo and color scheme.

TMAs Help Promote Livability

Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) are private, nonprofit organizations that work with employers and governments to provide transportation options in mostly suburban locations (e.g., commercial districts, malls and industrial parks). TMAs frequently work in support of livability principles and smart growth initiatives aimed at promoting efficient land-use patterns.

Many TMAs offer shuttle services and promote non-auto modes of transportation, such as walking and bicycling. TMAs also help employers provide flex-time, telecommuting, and compressed work schedule pilot projects; assist with the development of emergency ride home programs; and generate rideshare match-lists to potential carpoolers and vanpoolers.

The TMAs serving the NJTPA region are:

Meadowlink Commuter Services (meadowlink.org): Bergen County and western portions of Hudson County, eastern portions of Passaic, Union and Essex and Monmouth counties

TransOptions (transoptions.org): Morris, Sussex, Warren, and western portions of Passaic and Essex counties

Hudson TMA (hudsontma.org): Hudson County

Keep Middlesex Moving (kmm.org): Middlesex County

Ridewise (ridewise.org): Somerset County

HART Commuter Information Services (harttma.com): Hunterdon County

Greater Mercer TMA (gmtma.org): Mercer County, Montgomery Township (Somerset County) and Ocean County (In 2006, Ocean County established Coast TMA, which is operated by the Greater Mercer TMA)

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Transportation Issues in the NJTPA Region

BILL WITTKOP

▶ **Among the hallmarks of livable communities are their variety of transportation options and convenient access to destinations for people traveling with or without cars. Right, visitors admire the waterfront scenery near the Exchange Place commuter hub in Jersey City.**

In This Issue

- Livability in Northern New Jersey
- Transit-Oriented Development
- Urban Revitalization
- Thriving Main Streets

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